United Nations A/66/789

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 May 2012

Original: English

Sixty-sixth session
Agenda item 54
Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Letter dated 4 April 2012 from the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to write to you about the fourth workshop on the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations, co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations in New York on 9 February 2012.

The workshop was a very good opportunity to encourage an open, broad and constructive dialogue among Member States, peacekeepers from the field and the Secretariat about how efforts for the protection of civilians are being operationalized and to determine what further steps could be taken to support peacekeeping missions in carrying out their mandate to protect civilians.

A summary of the workshop discussions is attached (see annex), which briefly describes the main concerns, challenges and understandings raised by the participants in the event. We hope that the summary would be helpful in ongoing discussions that could take place in the General Assembly or its specialized body, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

We request that the present letter and its annex be circulated to all Member States as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 54.

(*Signed*) Gary **Quinlan**

(*Signed*) José Luis **Cancela**

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Annex to the letter dated 4 April 2012 from the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Fourth workshop on the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations, New York, 9 February 2012

1. The Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations co-hosted a fourth workshop on the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations on 9 February 2012.

2. The aim of the workshop was to provide a forum for an exchange of views between Member States, peacekeepers from the field and the Secretariat on how efforts to protect civilians are being operationalized and what challenges need to be addressed to support peacekeeping missions in carrying out their mandates to protect civilians. The workshop built on three earlier workshops on the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations in January 2009 (see A/63/722), January 2010 (see A/64/721) and December 2010 (see A/65/698), respectively.

Background

3. There had been significant efforts in recent years to translate mandates to protect civilians into meaningful protection on the ground. These efforts included building consensus on and understanding of what was needed for peacekeeping missions to implement mandates to protect civilians, and the development of various guidance materials and tools, including an operational concept on mandates to protect civilians, a framework for the development of comprehensive mission strategies on the protection of civilians (strategic framework), modules for predeployment and in-mission training, and a resources and capabilities matrix. These materials were developed in response to requests by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Security Council through resolution 1894 (2009).

4. Following on from many of the recommendations in the 2011 report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/65/19), New Horizon Initiatives Progress Report No. 2 (December 2011) noted that efforts on the protection of civilians were shifting from development to operationalization. The framework for the development of comprehensive strategies on the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations was being utilized by peacekeeping missions to develop their own mission-wide protection strategies. Training modules on the protection of civilians, including predeployment and scenario-based training, were being provided to Member States and peacekeeping missions as part of their predeployment and in-mission training for all peacekeepers involved in protection functions. At the request of the Special Committee, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support developed a resources and capabilities matrix intended as a reference guide for missions on the resources, preparedness and sustainability requirements needed to carry out certain objectives regarding the protection of civilians.

5. Against the backdrop of these developments, the workshop in February 2012 focused on the efforts to operationalize many of the tools that had been developed and the remaining challenges on the ground. The workshop was divided into two sessions to facilitate discussion among the panellists, Member States, the Secretariat and non-governmental organizations. A list of the panellists is enclosed and following is a summary of the key issues discussed in the sessions.

Session one
Role of military and police components in protecting civilians

6. The first session focused on the role of military and police peacekeepers in implementing a mandate to protect civilians, reflecting on the experiences of a major troop- and police-contributing country, as well as the perspectives of two peacekeepers from peacekeeping missions with mandates to protect civilians: the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

7. There was agreement that the military and police components in peacekeeping missions with mandates to protect civilians had several different responsibilities when it came to supporting the host country authorities in carrying out their responsibility to protect civilians, which often depended on the context of the situation. For the military components, this often included providing for direct physical protection in situations where civilians could be under threat of physical violence. To mitigate that threat, the military could undertake long- and short-range patrols to demonstrate their presence, establish temporary operating bases, and engage with the local communities to better assess the security situation, often in cooperation with other elements of the peacekeeping mission. Such activities also supported efforts to seek information and assess the situation on the ground, in order to plan any further action in response to developments, particularly regarding armed groups. Police peacekeepers could provide a similar function in certain circumstances, including providing security within internally displaced persons camps.

8. The military and formed police units often played a vital role in enabling other actors, including humanitarian organizations, to carry out their protection responsibilities by establishing security at sites and assisting the safe passage of convoys. Therefore, any limitations on the movement of personnel, particularly the military, had a direct impact not only on the wider efforts of the peacekeeping missions to provide for protection, but also for other protection actors meeting critical protection needs.

9. There was considerable discussion among many of the workshop participants about the challenges to the mobility of peacekeepers, which often hampered efforts to protect civilians. These challenges included a difficult environmental climate in which peacekeepers had to operate, with large areas of terrain to cover, a limited road network and inadequate supporting infrastructure. In some cases, despite approval at the strategic and political levels for peacekeepers to have access to particular geographical locations, the approval could differ at the local level or be affected by the refusal of major armed movements or tribal conflicts to adhere to a peace agreement. Other challenges included a lack of resources, difficulties maintaining contingent-owned equipment and the availability of training to military personnel on the protection of civilians.

10. The role of police peacekeepers in capacity-building through professionalizing national police services was also discussed. Recruiting and training local police on their obligations to protect the local population was an important step in enhancing the ability of the host Government to protect their civilian population. Police forces assisted with the establishment of the rule of law by supporting compliance with local laws, upholding human rights obligations (including placing limits on detention periods) and conducting community policing activities. Such activities contributed to overall efforts to improve the sense of protection within the local community. Women were sometimes better placed to intervene in certain circumstances, and it was therefore important that female police peacekeepers were present and efforts were made to recruit and train female police. Police peacekeepers had a vital role to play in mission-wide approaches to security sector reform and supporting the rule of law, critical to early peacebuilding and longer-term efforts to protect civilians.

11. Many approaches were raised throughout the discussion to address some of the challenges for troop- and police-contributing countries, and peacekeeping missions, regarding the implementation of mandates to protect civilians. These approaches included the need for a coherent approach to training peacekeepers for deployment to missions with a mandate to protect civilians and the provision of the resources and capabilities necessary to support the peacekeeping missions. The panellists agreed that the application of modern technologies would be helpful, but noted that many peacekeeping missions did not have access to the necessary equipment.

12. The discussion indicated that the military and police components needed to remain in close contact with the civilian components of the peacekeeping mission, as well as humanitarian actors and civil society, as they were often the most effective in engaging the local communities. Civilian components could assist in building confidence and managing expectations among the local population regarding the work of the peacekeeping mission to address their protection concerns. The importance of coordination among all actors supporting the protection of civilians was viewed as critical to ensuring that the peacekeeping missions had the necessary information and early warning mechanisms in place that would enable military and police components to assess where they should be prioritizing their activities to respond to threats and crises as they emerge.

Session two
Engaging with non-mission actors to protect civilians

13. The second session provided a forum for discussion about the different practices that had been developed within peacekeeping missions to ensure that efforts to protect civilians were being taken forward in a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable manner. Drawing on examples from the field, the panellists identified several mission-wide practices that were responding to some of the challenges on the ground in different mission contexts.

14. Discussion focused on the usefulness of mission-wide strategies to guide the approach of peacekeeping missions regarding the implementation of their mandate to protect civilians. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support had provided guidance to peacekeeping missions to develop comprehensive mission-wide strategies (for example, through the rollout of the strategic framework). Panellists agreed that it was important that the

development of mission-wide strategies incorporated the perspectives of all actors involved in protection activities, including the United Nations country team, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

15. Mission-specific strategies were discussed as a critical platform for information sharing and developing a common picture of the threats to and the vulnerabilities of a civilian population, as well as establishing early warning capacities. Some good practices that had been developed in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo included the development of a protection matrix by the provincial senior management group on protection in consultation with provincial protection clusters. The protection matrix identified priorities for military deployments through categorizations of (a) "must protect", (b) "should protect" and (c) "could protect" areas. This discussion of different categories ensured that hot spots for protection threats within the mission were not left without some form of mission position or response. Joint protection teams were another useful and innovative tool that aided cooperation between civil-military components within the peacekeeping missions and worked in close cooperation with peacekeepers to assess protection needs and develop protection plans.

16. Many of the panellists noted that local communities had a critical role to play in supporting their own protection. It was important that peacekeeping missions did not overlook many of the resilience tools that local communities already had in place (for example, local church networks). The community alert network was also a tool to reinforce the capacity of the local community for its self-protection, enabling isolated communities to get in contact with local authorities or the peacekeeping mission. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations could assist with establishing the necessary infrastructure (for example, telecommunications) in place to support such networks. Community liaison assistants were another protection mechanism helping to identify and integrate the perceptions of the local communities into the work of peacekeeping missions, helping to extend their reach into remote areas. This reach was particularly important when missions were faced with the challenges of providing protection to civilians across vast areas and with limited mobility. Investing in the ability of the local communities to assist in their own protection also aided longer-term efforts to build capacity for protection within the country. Civil affairs officers played an important role in establishing many of the community-based mechanisms that ensured missions were better prepared to address protection risks and threats.

17. Many of the participants noted that the protection of civilians extended beyond the provision of physical protection into other areas of activity that relied on the effective functioning of the host government and local authorities. Peacekeeping missions had an important role to play in extending State authority, particularly in remote regions and to support capacity-building efforts to assist the Government to build effective and functioning State institutions that would support the rule of law through the establishment of justice mechanisms and a professional security sector. Local ownership of these processes was considered vital to ensuring that efforts to protect civilians would be sustained following the peacekeeping mission drawdown and transition. Another important aspect of engaging the host government in efforts to protect civilians was ensuring that there were different levels of engagement, from senior mission leadership through to the working level, between the

peacekeeping missions, and within the government, on efforts to address protection concerns in a coherent manner.

Conclusion

18. The discussions demonstrated that many of the challenges faced by peacekeeping missions regarding the protection of civilians still remained and required ongoing attention. It was often peacekeeping missions which were leading efforts to develop new approaches to challenges faced in the field in the protection of civilians. There were several good practices and lessons learned that were emerging from the experiences, in particular peacekeeping missions that would benefit from further analysis regarding their applicability to other peacekeeping missions with a mandate to protect civilians.

19. Peacekeeping missions needed to ensure that all the actors on the ground providing protection were engaged in discussions about protection needs, risks and vulnerabilities, in order to ensure that resources were used most effectively and that the comparative advantages that each actor could bring to protection efforts were utilized most effectively. One of the primary strengths of the military personnel was their ability to project force in certain situations, to provide for the security of other protection actors in carrying out their tasks and to deter any physical threats aimed at the civilian population. Therefore, it was important that they had the necessary guidance, training, resources and capabilities to support these tasks. Political support and engagement at all levels with the host government and local authorities was also required to ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of this task and to avoid restrictions on mobility.

20. Peacekeeping missions also needed to ensure that their efforts to protect civilians focused not only on the immediate risks and vulnerabilities, but also on the longer-term early peacebuilding tasks and capacity-building initiatives that would assist the host government in fulfilling its primary responsibility to protect civilians long after the peacekeeping mission had drawn down. Police peacekeepers had a key role to play in supporting efforts to reform and train national police forces that would be responsible for many of these functions. Civilian components, in particular civil affairs officers, were also becoming increasingly important to inform the understanding of the peacekeeping mission about the needs of the local population and authorities when it came to their own protection.

21. There was broad agreement that the discussion on the protection of civilians had made considerable progress within the past three years and that the United Nations was moving in the right direction. Critical to efforts going forward would be the monitoring of the impact that the development of policy tools had on addressing challenges that remained with regard to the protection of civilians by peacekeeping missions. Some of the reforms would be specific to the protection of civilians, whereas others would rely on a comprehensive approach to challenges facing peacekeeping missions.

Enclosure

Session one
Role of military and police components in protecting civilians

Chair:	José Luis Cancela, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations
Panellists:	Eugène-Richard Gasana, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations
	Mamadou Sow, Force Chief of Staff, UNAMID
	Tabasky Diouf, Deputy Police Commissioner, MINUSTAH

Session two
Engaging with non-mission actors to protect civilians

Chair:	Gary Quinlan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations
Panellists:	Leila Zerrougui, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, MONUSCO
	John Ging, Director, Coordination and Response Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
	David Haeri, Chief, Policy and Best Practices Service, Department of Peacekeeping Operations